



Trackin' Fall & Winter 2023-2024 Edition

Bringing you news and information about Chautauqua Rails to Trails that took place in the Fall and Winter of 2023-2024.



Photo Courtesy of Martha Anderson

From the Locomotive

By Bill Ward, President

Greetings, trail pals! Thanks for picking up the new Trackin' - all the news for keeping fit!

Coming off of a busy (and pretty fun) winter season, we're looking forward to a spring and summer full of lots of CR2T progress and activity.

As you read on, you'll be brought up to date on our guided hikes, Christmas traditions, and plans for this year.

Big thanks to our highlighted board members, Bree Agett, Judy Takats, and Wendy Lewellen.

Bree has been an integral part of the Chautauqua Rails to Trails family since well before I came along, and her vision for highlighting the trails is exemplified by the hugely successful Annual Wine Walk. With Elsa Nelson leading the way, this event has been one of our most successful ventures.



Judy Takats is not only our member coordinator extraordinaire, she plans (and often leads) our planned weekly hikes. Her behind the scenes work has kept the train running for years.



The same can be said for our intrepid Secretary Wendy Lewellen. Besides keeping the logs of our meetings straight, she handles much of the signage duties, and has even authored a brand new CR2T book. Read on for more about that.



Thanks to these three and all of the trailblazers who continue the fine work on the Rail Trails in this fine county.

And now, dear reader, enjoy the musings of some of the Trackin' contributors:

Good Soles Book Release

By Wendy Lewellen, Secretary



Chautauqua Rails to Trails is pleased to announce the long-awaited publication of Wendy Lewellen's book, *Good Soles: Chautauqua Rails to Trails Namesakes and Trailblazers*.

A long-time devotee of the organization, Ms. Lewellen serves as secretary to CR2T and was moved to write this book when she undertook the task of refurbishing, replacing, and repainting some of the signs which bear the trail segments' namesakes. In the preface of the book, she writes, "My aim is for you to enjoy and be enriched by these profiles of the people for whom our various trails are named or credited in our trail signage. The next time you enter one of our trails and see the sign, if you wish, well now you know."

The publication highlights the lives of each of these folks and sheds insights into who they are and how they relate to Chautauqua County trail history. It also gives credit to the early impassioned trailblazers who worked so hard throughout the early 1990s and beyond. A history of the organization is included.

She is offering the books for donations to her beloved, all-volunteer Chautauqua Rails to Trails. 100 percent of the proceeds go to the organization and not to the author.

Information on how to donate is available on our website at <https://chaurtt.org/>

Christmas Eve Memorial Hike

By Wendy Lewellen, Secretary



We were happy that the weather cooperated and allowed us to conduct this increasingly rich Chautauqua Rails to Trails tradition on Christmas Eve afternoon near the Prospect Station trailhead on the Alison Wells Ney Nature Trail. There were easily 100 or so in attendance.

President Bill Ward conducted the program with his usual grace and aplomb. President Emeritus Jim Fincher related the story of the deadly train wreck tragedy. He also enlightened us with the story of how the monument was obtained. Bill sang and played his original composition, “Christmas Eve at Prospect Station” which never gets old. We were pleased to realize that there were a couple of attendees who were descendants of some of the victims.

Afterward, everyone hiked back to the trailhead and many availed themselves of sweets and hot drinks. Many trail lovers were generous enough to donate money for our cause by purchasing the fundraising book, *GOOD SOLES: Chautauqua Rails to Trails Namesakes and Trailblazers*. For that we are grateful. See you next year!

CR2T Holiday Happy Hour

By Bree Agett, Board Member

Big Inlet Brewing was a packed house on December 4th, 2023 for the CR2T Holiday



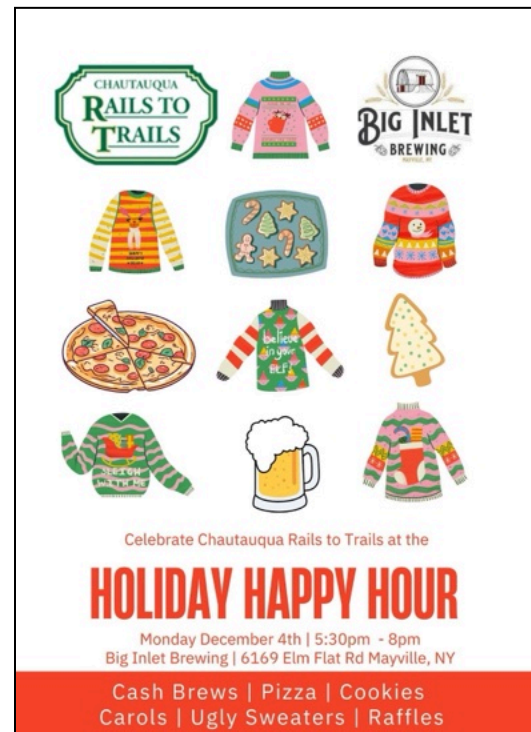
Happy Hour! It was standing room only for caroling, drinking local brews, enjoying holiday treats, and supporting the trails. Guests were encouraged to sport festive holiday gear and ugly sweaters; prizes were given to the best!

Alongside traditional Holiday Happy Hour happenings, the evening was also the premier book signing event for Wendy Lewellen's masterpiece, *GOOD SOLES: Chautauqua Rails to Trails Namesakes and Trailblazers*.

As the Happy Hour also served as the CR2T monthly board meeting, President Bill Ward shared updates about the trail and acknowledged the outstanding efforts of three board members over the year: Bree Agett, Wendy Lewellen, and Judy Takats.

Through 50/50 and basket raffles, \$982 was raised to support Chautauqua Rails to Trails! Thank you to all who came out, generously donated to our organization, and made the night one to remember.

We owe many thanks to the people and businesses whose time, talents, and donations made the event possible. These include, but are not limited to:



- Big Inlet Brewing for providing their space and slinging drinks.
- Our musicians for sharing their talents: Marci Bird, John Cross, William Downe, Bob Henry, Derek Houser, and President Bill Ward.
- Coppola's Pizzeria for subsidizing and delivering pizza for the evening.
- Our volunteers who made cookies for the event.
- The many generous local businesses and individuals who donated baskets for the raffles, including: Martha Anderson, Bag + String, Marion Evans, Fredonia Opera House, Handcrafted from the Heart, Mary Hunt, Mayberry Jungle, Mayville Hardware, McDuffers Virtual Golf, Music for Your Mouth, National Comedy Center, Rosie's Workshop, Starbucks, Stedman Corners Coffee Roasters, Judy Takats, Thom Wright.
- Our board members and friends who helped with event logistics.
- Marci Bird and Dena Ward for their incredible work in soliciting donations!



Monday Morning Group Hikes

By Judy Takats, Membership Coordinator



We have our Monday Morning Hikes year round starting at 9:30 AM. Please join us and feel free to bring a friend. Anyone is welcome to come. You do not have to be a member of Chautauqua Rails to Trails.

The hikes typically take place on Chautauqua Rails to Trails, with some other trails occasionally being selected during winter or hunting season.

If you would like to be put on the Monday Morning hiking list, please contact Judy Takats, our Membership Coordinator, at jtakats@gmail.com.

How to Report Trail Maintenance Needs

For any trail maintenance needs, please contact us through the contact form on our website - <https://chaurtt.org/join-us/>

Check Out Our Website!

For the latest and greatest information, check out our website at <https://chaurtt.org/>

Summerdale Parking Lot Improvements

By Thom Wright, Trail Maintenance Czar



Thank you to everyone who donated on Giving Tuesday to improve the Summerdale Parking Lot. As a nonprofit and volunteer organization, our funding comes from the generosity, passion, and support of donors.

The Summerdale Parking Lot is owned by Chautauqua Rails to Trails, and also used for those who enjoy the new Chautauqua Gorge loop on the Fred J Cusimano Westside Overland Trail. With the success of the new loop, more safe off-road parking was needed. The old parking area only had spaces for a few vehicles.

It is now much more user friendly and there are spaces for several more cars. When you park there, please be kind and nose your car in towards the bank on the right. It will make sure others have room to park their cars.

A big thank you goes out to Rizzo Excavation & Trucking for completing the expansion of our Summerdale parking lot. Please keep them in mind for your excavation, trenching, and gravel needs.

Third Saturday Co-Sponsored Hikes

By Judy Takats, Membership Coordinator



Every month, we continue to hold our 3rd Saturday Hikes that are co-sponsored by the Chautauqua County Hiking Club.

These hikes are a great opportunity to get some exercise, meet new people and learn more about the plant & bird life and history of our area. Please let us know if you have a special interest (birds, plants, insects ...?) and would like to lead us on a nature informative hike. If you are interested, please contact Judy Takats, our Membership Coordinator, at jtakats@gmail.com.

As always, your membership in CR2T keeps you on our “events list “. You will be one of the first ones to hear about events and news. We will be adding more hikes and events.

Without our members like you, our miles of trails would not be possible. Thank you for supporting Chautauqua Rails to Trails! If you need to renew your membership, please go to our website and you can renew your membership on our donations page at <https://chaurtt.org/donate/>

Volunteers Needed

By Judy Takats, Membership Coordinator



Chautauqua Rails to Trails is a fully run volunteer organization. We could use your help and support.

You say you would like to help, but you are not up to or not interested in the physical work of trail maintenance. Don't let that stop you.

We have other volunteer activities that we need help with that include organizing events, fundraising, leading a group hike, distributing trail maps, helping at our annual wine walk, and other opportunities. If you have ideas for volunteering, please reach out to us and let us know.

If you are interested in volunteering, contact Judy Takats at jtakats@gmail.com. Or, join us for a board meeting, generally the first Monday of the month, to learn more.

Officers Elected at Annual Meeting

By Wendy Lewellen, Secretary

Utilizing the change in our by-laws to hold our annual meeting in November instead of September, the Nominating Committee presented a slate of officers which were incumbents this year, on November 6, 2023. Until next November the officers are:

President—Bill Ward of Mayville
Vice President—T. John McCune of Fredonia
Secretary—Wendy Lewellen of Bemus Point

Dorothy Gruber of Portland has joined the board and agreed to serve as our new Treasurer.

Judy Takats of Portland agreed to once again serve as Membership Chairperson.

Thom Wright will continue to be the Trail Maintenance Czar.

Nickels for the Rail Trail

By Thom Wright, Trail Maintenance Czar

It's not our business what kind of beverages you like to drink, but an easy way for you to help CR2T is to drop off those empty containers at Southside Redemption Center or Don's Car Wash and donate them to the trails.

Just drop off your returnable cans and bottles and let the attendant know that they can add the total refund to the Chautauqua Rails to Trails account.

Southside Redemption Center

1752 Foote Ave, Jamestown, NY

Don's Car Wash

184 East Fairmount Ave, Lakewood, NY

Since Our Last Trackin'

By Wendy Lewellen, Secretary

One doesn't realize the magnitude of the achievements of CR2T until one sits down to detail them. I will hit the high points.

Collaborative Efforts

Before he went south Patrick Johnson made even more inroads to attaining property owner permissions in his dogged effort to make the Sherman to Clymer link a reality. He sees that the rail trail from Bailey Hill Rd. to the Alder Bottom Wildlife Management Area will likely be the first to be opened up. On Sept. 26 T. John McCune, Johnson, and Jacob Bodway met with interested Clymer residents, about 15 of them, to fill them in on our efforts and intentions. The group was perceived as supportive. The three, in addition to Bill Ward, have maintained a vocal presence for the Greenway Plan, the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance, and the Barcelona to Chautauqua Institution Nature Trail initiative.

Events

Patrick organized our first Gravel Grinder ride which had various options of distance on the entire trail system. We netted over \$700, even though it had to be held on the Sept. 9 rain date. Our annual Holiday Happy Hour at Big Inlet on Dec. 4, was a success from every perspective. The Basket Fundraiser that night netted \$967. The traditional commemoration of the lives lost in the infamous Christmas Eve 1872 trainwreck near Prospect Station was once again an informative, entertaining, and communal event.

Trail Improvements

Trail Maintenance Czar Thom Wright led the charge in improving and enlarging the parking lot at the Summerdale Rd. entrance. With the help of the Sheldon Foundation we vastly improved Webb 2 trail between Morris Rd. and Rt. 430, which used to be close to impassable. The same is true of the Fincher Trail between Rt. 430 and Honeysette Rd, where we have utilized a considerable donation by a trail user. We also deemed our first yearly effort to hire professionals to mow the entire 29 miles of trails to be a success as we no longer had to depend on volunteers.

Signage Additions

Signage committee members teamed up to improve signage at Nettle Hill Rd., thanks to Sign Ninja Bob Lannon, sign orderer Wendy Lewellen, assistants Dave Akin and Bev Lannon. That team also purchased and erected 20 “No Unauthorized Motor Vehicles” signs. Ginny and Jerry King erected quite a few “Courtesy/Yielding triangular signs. Thom Wright and Lewellen saw to it that we improved our signage at Main Street in Frewsburg at one end of the C.A.N. Trail.

Miscellaneous Accomplishments

Jim Fincher, T. John McCune, Bill Ward, and volunteer professional surveyor Mickey Sorenson made inroads in attaining landowners’ support on the conversion of the rail bed to a viable trail in order to bypass the Ellicott Road Walk.

Lewellen designed new trail guides which included the Carroll Area Nature Trail and other map alterations. She also launched the 100% fundraising book, *Good Soles: Chautauqua Rails to Trails Namesakes and Trailblazers*.

Several board members became certified in the use of chainsaws.

Bill Ward and Thom Wright introduced the idea of creating a system for legacy giving. Ward and McCune obtained a suitable and necessary model of six policies: Anti-Nepotism; Code of Conduct; Conflict of Interest; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Internal Controls; and Supervision and Performance Evaluation. The policies were approved.

Judy Takats has continually generated more interest, measured by attendance, in the 3rd Saturday Hikes as well as weekly Monday morning hikes. Membership hovers around 200, which was a formidable goal until recently.

Note: This compilation does not claim to be comprehensive; it is meant to hit the highlights. What a team!

CR2T Board of Directors



Breeanne Agett, Jamestown

David Akin, Mayville

Dorothy Gruber, Portland (Treasurer)

Jacob Bodway, Bemus Point

Dee Dippel, Bemus Point

Bob Lannon, Mayville (Sign Ninja)

Wendy Lewellen, Bemus Point (Secretary)

T. John McCune, Fredonia (Vice President)

Tom Miller, Maple Springs

Judy Takats, Portland (Membership Chair)

Bill Ward, Mayville (President)

Dena Ward, Mayville

Thom Wright, Jamestown (Trail Maintenance Czar)

If you have an interest in joining our Board of Directors, please let us know by calling Bill Ward at 716-753-2800 or any board member you may know. There are so many challenges and we can surely use more trail-loving help. We meet on the first Monday of each month at 6:00 in varying locations.

Thank You to Outgoing Board Members!

By T. John McCune, Vice President

We wanted to make sure we acknowledged our outgoing board members. We are a 100 percent volunteer organization and the passion and hard work from all of our talented members is what makes it all possible.

Virginia King

Virginia King was in rails to trails from 1992-1999 and was treasurer for 5 years then Sam Thorndike took over the treasurer position. She was there at the auction when we bought the properties from the railroad and walked the trails with John Goodell before our purchases. At our annual meeting in 2023, Virginia was recognized for her outstanding service to Chautauqua Rails to Trails. We want to thank Virginia for all her work in serving on the board!

Elsa Nelson

Elsa Nelson served on the board for many years. With her leadership, CR2T had many successful Wine Walk fundraisers and it has become a highlight of many people's summers. People already reach out, almost a year in advance, asking when the next Wine Walk will be so they don't miss it. We also appreciate all of Elsa's work as a past Treasurer, and helping with many other incredible events and fundraisers. Thank you to Elsa and we really appreciate her continuing to volunteer with events!

Patrick Johnson

Patrick Johnson, a cross-country cyclist, served on the board for several years as our liaison to the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance. His efforts to negotiate with relevant property owners with the goal of connecting Sherman to Clymer, showed significant progress to connect our trail with other parts of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail. Patrick Johnson was also instrumental in spearheading the first ever Chautauqua Gravel Grinder ride which was a great success. Thank you to Patrick as we build upon his great work to extend our trail.

Legacy Donations

By T. John McCune, Vice President

Ways to Leave Your Legacy

CR2T provides safe, attractive trails for non motorized trail users. The trails wind through wetlands, pine forests, hardwood forests, pastures and vineyards. These trails provide public access offering trail users opportunities to observe the plants, animals and birds found in areas otherwise remote from highways and roads. Observing and learning about nature, about the history of the area and getting healthy physical exercise is what trail users can expect.

There are several ways that through your legacy you can help with CR2T's vision to develop and connect a network of safe and accessible trails for all Chautauqua County families and visitors to the area.

A Bequest in Your Will

The simplest way to include the Chautauqua Rails to Trails in your planned giving is to write us into your will.

The following is sample language that you can use: I give and bequeath to the Chautauqua Rails to Trails, PO Box 151, Mayville, NY, 14757-0151, _____% of my estate (or the sum of \$_____, a specific piece of property, or asset) to be used as advised by the board of directors.

IRA, 401K, or Life Insurance Policy

Do you have an IRA, 401(k), life insurance policy, or any other assets not included in your will? If so, these are called non-probate assets, and you must plan your beneficiaries for them separately. If you'd like to do this on your own, simply include our full name and address when filling out your beneficiaries: Chautauqua Rails to Trails, PO Box 151, Mayville, NY, 14757-0151.

Donor-Advised Fund

If you are using a donor-advised fund for your annual giving, consider directing your fund administrator to designate Chautauqua Rails to Trails as the beneficiary of any remainder.

As a Contingent Beneficiary

If you have family members or friends that you plan on leaving your assets to, consider including the Chautauqua Rails to Trails as a contingent beneficiary. This ensures that, no matter what happens, your assets will end up protected and designated.

Let Us Know!

Have you already included a gift in your will or trust to us? We would love to thank you for your generosity! Please let us know by contacting us to ensure that we know your vision and goals.

Follow Us on Social Media

For more information about the Chautauqua Rails to Trails, please like our page on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/ChautauquaRailsToTrails>), or follow us on Instagram (ChautauquaRailstoTrails).

If you tag us on social media, please use the hashtags #CR2T, #chautauquarailstotrails, #railstotrails, #hikewny, & #erietopittsburghtrail



Support The Efforts of CR2T!

____ Yes, I want to support CR2T's effort to change the abandoned rail lines of Chautauqua County into multi-use trails which can be enjoyed by all.

____ Individual \$25 ____ Sustaining \$100
 ____ Family \$40 ____ Benefactor \$500
 ____ Patron \$60 ____ Sponsor \$1000 & up
 ____ Business Partner \$100/\$200 per year for 10 years

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Phone: _____ Email: _____

Detach & mail form to: Chautauqua Rails to Trails,
 P.O. Box 151, Mayville, NY 14757. *Thank you!*